तव कथामृतं तप्तजीवनम्
tava kathāmṛtaṁ tapta-jīvanam

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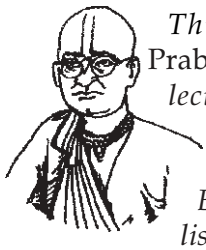
How can we Become gurus?

Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur Prabhupada



This is excerpted from Prabhupader Upadeśāmṛta, *a collection of the teachings of Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati compiled by Sri Bhakti Mayukh Bhagavata Maharaja, and published in Bengali. The book is in the form of a series of questions composed by the compiler, with answers extracted from Srila Bhaktisiddhanta's teachings.*

Can we make disciples?

We should not make disciples until we have become liberated or a pure devotee. You must first take shelter of a bona fide guru, become a disciple, and listen to the topics of Krishna from his mouth. Then you have to put everything you have heard into practice and repeat it to others with humility. After doing this for some time, you must become guru yourself. You should not intentionally remain a lightweight for the rest of your days ["guru" literally means "heavy"]. This is a kind of self-deception. To become guru means to become a genuine devotee, engaging all of your senses in the service of Krishna at every moment.

This does not mean that you absolutely have to make disciples. Even so, if it is God's will, some pure devotees teach Krishna consciousness for the benefit of others. They have no ulterior motive in doing so. Their one and only purpose is to make the light heavy, i.e., to turn those with no interest in Krishna towards him and make everyone into Krishna's devotees.

Do we have to make disciples?

We don't have to make disciples, we have to become disciples. In other words, we have to remain constantly engaged in the service of Krishna and the spiritual master. The devotees of Vishnu, the *vaiṣṇavas*, see the guru in all things. If one becomes proud of being a *vaiṣṇava*, then one's service to Vishnu and the *vaiṣṇavas* evaporates. One who is free from the sense that he is the doer, who thinks, "I actually do nothing myself. It is Krishna alone who engages me in all activities," and who is constantly engaged in the service of the Lord can actually do something beneficial for the ordinary souls by turning them towards Krishna. But it is not enough to make phony speeches about how you are not the doer. You have to genuinely feel that you are being made to act by the Lord.

Will I be able to make disciples?

Give up your enviousness and show mercy to every living being by turning those who are currently indifferent to Krishna back toward him. Don't take up the role of spiritual master in order to do harm to others. Don't play at spiritual master with the intention of immersing yourself in sense objects. Don't just dress up as spiritual master. Should you manage to become a sincere servant of the guru and Krishna and acquire their blessings, then there will be nothing to fear. If not, however, you are doomed.

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Who can carry out the guru's mission?

The work of spiritual master is done by those who have been sent here by the Lord from the transcendental world. They take on the appearance of ordinary human beings for the sake of unfortunate conditioned souls like ourselves, to deliver them from the three miseries and send them back to the divine realm. The Lord's messengers, the carriers of His divine message, are the intimate associates of the Lord.

The true holy person carries a sharpened sword with which he beheads the goat-like tendencies to enjoy and renounce, sacrificing them on the altar of devotion. Such a person is the true spiritual master.

The spiritual master is one who has no duty other than service to Krishna, whose intelligence is fixed on Krishna, and who sees nothing but Krishna. He has no desire to hear flattery, and thus is beholden to no one. He can fearlessly preach the truth.

One is eligible to become guru if he speaks nothing but *hari-kathā*, if he never instructs anyone in anything other than devotional service, and if he does not waste even a second of the day in activities other than pleasing Krishna.

An insincere hypocrite cannot be a guru. One whose aspiration is for mundane activity cannot be a guru. Pseudo-gurus should be turned out and exposed. If one selfishly uses the gifts his disciples have surrendered to the Lord, taking them as a means to accumulate wealth, women and worldly fame, then he should be renounced immediately as a cheater. One should not listen to the words of such a rascal. One who purloins the materials that are meant for God's service in his own selfish interest is not worthy of the name "guru".

The *Nāradīya-purāṇa* says:

> *īhā yasya harer dāsye karmaṇā manasā girā*
> *nikhilāsv apy avasthāsu jīvan-muktaḥ sa ucyate*

> One is called a living liberated soul who in all circumstances performs every action, whether of the body, mind or speech, in the service of Krishna. (Quoted in *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* 1.2.187)

The atheist who is engaged in social service instead of devotional service to the Lord should be avoided, for such a person can benefit neither himself nor anyone else. In the name of such so-called social service, one simply falls deeper and deeper into the pit of illusion while dragging others down with him.

We refuse to keep the company of those who try to deceive the Supreme Lord by chanting on their beads or by crying and making a great show of emotion, but who do not see Krishna in every syllable, or see the beautiful Gauranga in every sound. The ultimate goal of scholarship is to understand one's relation with Krishna. Our lives can truly become auspicious only when we understand, through the association of *sādhus* and obedience to the spiritual master's order, that everything in the universe is somehow meant for the service of the Lord.

The path to auspiciousness is revealed when we associate with devotees who see the Lord everywhere, or who see everything in relation to the Lord, who see the spiritual master everywhere, who are more humble than the straw in the street, who are as tolerant as the tree, who are free of pride but full of respect for others, and who are constantly engaged in chanting the holy names attentively. It is only with the greatest good fortune that we encounter a saintly person of such qualifications. A servant of illusion may disguise himself as a spiritual master, but he will never be able to approach Mahaprabhu Gaurasundar through the enjoying mentality. Even if Gauranga's pastimes in this world, his *prakaṭa-līlā*, are not going on at the present moment, if I am able to stay in the company of the guru and holy persons, then my consciousness will be dovetailed with theirs; my desires and aspirations will mix with theirs. If we are able to take shelter of the spiritual master in this way, surrendering ourselves fully to his lotus feet, then we will achieve the greatest good through good association, service, and obedience.

Is it proper for us to make disciples?

The genuine guru does not make anyone his disciple. Rather, he makes everyone his guru by turning those who have no interest in Krishna into devotees. He tries to give Krishna pleasure by engaging everyone in his service. The guru's vision is that everything has importance; thus his every action is an act of devotion. The spiritual master sees the guru everywhere and everything related to Krishna. For him nothing is insignificant;

nothing is seen as an object of the senses. He does not see this world as a mundane creation. The guru's work is a lot like that of a medical professor in the university — he is not making students, but doctors. Similarly, the guru is making other gurus.

If the *vaiṣṇavas* do not play the role of spiritual master, then the transcendental family of *vaiṣṇavas* will dwindle and disappear. The problem is that as soon as one becomes guru, he ceases to be a *vaiṣṇava*. Therefore it is not proper to act as guru if one is not qualified. This means only inauspicious results for the disciple and falldown for the guru. The spiritual master does not identify himself as a guru, for his inner identification as a servant of God is too powerful. If the spiritual master thinks of himself as guru, then the first vowel of his name changes and he becomes *goru* — a cow.

The genuine guru is engaged twenty-four hours a day in Lord Krishna's service. He acknowledges no duty other than serving Krishna. Thus the only person who is qualified to do the work of a guru is the devotee who is completely committed to his own spiritual master and has made service to him his life.

Who can take on the role of spiritual master?

A devotee of Krishna who knows the philosophy of Krishna consciousness can act as spiritual master. Those who are ritualists, impersonalists, or yogis, can never be accepted as guru because they are not devotees. Only one who worships the Personality of Godhead can be guru.

On the other hand, someone who proudly thinks that he has become the servant of Krishna cannot be guru either. As long as one considers oneself a *vaiṣṇava*, he cannot be guru. For this reason, anyone who functions as a guru does not go around calling himself a guru or a *vaiṣṇava*. This is why my spiritual master never claimed to be a *vaiṣṇava*. Anyone who calls himself a *vaiṣṇava* is immediately branded a "non-*vaiṣṇava*."

āmi to' vaiṣṇava e buddhi hoile
amānī nā ho'bo āmi
pratiṣṭhāśā āsi' hṛdoya dūṣibe
hoibo niraya-gāmī

If I think, "I am a *vaiṣṇava*," then I will never become humble. My heart will become contaminated with the hope of receiving honor from others, and I will surely go to hell.

tomāra kiṅkora āpane jānibo
guru-abhimāna tyaji'
tomāra ucchiṣṭha pada-jala-reṇu
sadā niṣkapaṭe bhaji

Give me the mercy that I can renounce the false conception of my being guru and can be your servant. Let me accept without duplicity your remnants, the dust of your feet, and the water that has washed them.

nije śreṣṭha jāni' ucchiṣṭhādi dāne
ho'be abhimāna bhāra
tāi śiṣya taba thākiyā sarvadā
nā loibo pūjā kā'ra

By thinking that I am superior and giving my remnants to others, I will become increasingly egotistical. Let me always remain in the mood of a disciple and never accept any worship or praise from others.

The *mahā-bhāgavata* is the true guru. Only someone who has achieved the status of *mahā-bhāgavata* can take the role of spiritual master. One can act as guru when he himself sees the guru everywhere, for such a person can transform another insignificant individual into one capable of imparting spiritual instruction himself. He can turn a non-devotee into a devotee. Evidently, if one is not himself a devotee he cannot make anyone else into a devotee. Thus, the meaning of being guru is being a devotee. All of one's senses must be engaged in the service of the Lord. If one cannot become fixed in the service of the guru, he has no right to act as guru.

The *mahā-bhāgavata* is more humble than the grass in the street. He thinks he is the most insignificant person in the world. He does not think, "I have played the role of servant long enough; it's no fun any more. I need to be guru now."

The guru serves as spiritual master, but does not identify himself with that role.

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Don't Give up Pushing on this Movement

His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada

Today is the ninth of December 1968. Thirty-two years ago, I was in Bombay doing some business. At that time Guru Maharaja was a little indisposed, and was staying at Jagannath Puri on the seashore. So I wrote him a letter, "My dear master, your *brahmacārī* and *sannyāsī* disciples are rendering you direct service. I am a householder. I cannot live with you; I cannot serve you nicely. How can I serve you seriously?" His reply was dated 13th December 1936. In that letter he wrote, "My dear such and such, I am very glad to receive your letter. I think that you should try to push our movement in English. That will do good to you and to the people who will help you." That was his instruction.

Then in 1936, on 31st December — just a fortnight after writing me this letter — he passed away. I took that order of my spiritual master very seriously. I was a householder. But if we strictly try to serve the order of the spiritual master, then Krishna will give us all facilities. That is the secret. I took it a little seriously by studying a commentary by Viswanath Chakravarti Thakur on the *Bhagavad-gītā* verse, *vyavasāyātmikā-buddhir ekeha kuru-nandana* [*Bg.* 2.41]. Concerning that verse, Viswanath Chakravarti Thakur comments that we should take up the words from the spiritual master as our life and soul. We should try to carry out the specific instruction of the spiritual master very rigidly, without caring for our personal benefit or loss.

So I tried a little bit in that spirit, and he has given me all facilities to serve him. Things have come to this stage, that in this old age I have come to your country, and you are taking this movement seriously, trying to understand it. We have some books now, so there is a little foothold of this movement. On this occasion of my spiritual master's departure, as I am trying to execute his will, similarly, I request you to execute the same order through my will. I am an old man; I can also pass away at any moment. That is nature's law. Nobody can check it. That is not very astonishing. At least to some extent you have understood the essence of this Krishna consciousness movement. So my appeal to you on this auspicious day of the departure of my Guru Maharaja is that you should try to push on this movement. People are suffering for want of this consciousness.

... This Krishna consciousness movement is authorized, very important. Now, you American boys and girls who have taken to this movement, please take it more seriously. This is the mission of Lord Chaitanya and my Guru Maharaja. We are trying to execute the will of the disciplic succession. You have come forward to help me. I shall go away, but you will live. I request all of you, don't give up pushing on this movement, and you'll be blessed by Lord Chaitanya and His Divine Grace Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Prabhupada.

— Lecture in Los Angeles, 9 December 1968.

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